

Message Text

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PAGE 01 QUEBEC 00340 130224Z
ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMCONSUL QUEBEC
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1110
INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY
AMCONSUL MONTREAL
AMCONSUL TORONTO POUCH

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUEBEC 0340

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, CA
SUBJ: RENE REJECTS PIERRE'S PROPOSAL

REF: OTTAWA 8182

1. RENE LEVESQUE REJECTED AS "UNTHINKABLE" TRUDEAU PROPOSAL (REFTEL) TO ENSHRINE MINORITY LINGUISTIC RIGHTS IN CANADIAN CONSTITUTION. IN POLITE BUT UNEQUIVOCAL RETORT TO PRIME MINISTER'S OFFER, LEVESQUE CONCLUDED THAT TO ACCEPT INCLUSION OF LINGUISTIC RIGHTS IN CONSTITUTION WOULD UNDERCUT EXCLUSIVE JURISDICTION OVER EDUCATION PROVINCES NOW ENJOY UNDER TERMS OF BRITISH NORTH AMERICAN ACT. "QUEBEC WILL NEVER ACCEPT THAT ITS SOVEREIGNTY IN SUCH VITAL MATTERS BE REPLACED BY LIMITED JURISDICTION SUBJECT TO JUDICIAL APPROVAL. IT WOULD BE UNTHINKABLE THAT SUPREME COURT OF CANADA, A MAJORITY OF WHOSE MEMBERS WILL ALWAYS BE ENGLISH-SPEAKING AND NON-QUEBECERS, COULD REPLACE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AS FINAL AUTHORITY IN FIELD OF EDUCATION." LEVESQUE COMMENTED TARTLY TO PRESS CONFERENCE ON SEPT. 8 THAT HIS GOVERNMENT HAS NO WISH TO BECOME INVOLVED IN "STERILE" CONSTITUTIONAL DISCUSSIONS WHICH HAVE TAKEN PLACE DURING LAST DECADE. TONGUE IN CHEEK, PREMIER NOTED
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 QUEBEC 00340 130224Z

WHAT HE DESCRIBED AS RECOGNITION GIVEN IN TRUDEAU LETTER TO THE CRITERIA FOR ADMISSION TO ENGLISH SCHOOL CONTAINED IN LAW 101. "WE SEE IN THIS AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE CONSTITUTIONALITY OF OUR LAW," HE ADDED.

2. OVER WEEKEND, LEVESQUE GOT SUPPORT OF HIS REJECTION FROM UNEXPECTED SOURCES. UNION NATIONALE LEADER, RODRIGUE BIRON,

TOLD PRESS ON SEPT. 9 THAT LEVESQUE WAS QUITE RIGHT IN PROTECTING QUEBEC'S EXCLUSIVE JURISDICTION IN EDUCATIONAL MATTERS. "LE DEVOIR'S" EDITOR, CLAUDE RYAN, USUALLY AMONG PQ'S MOST SEVERE CRITICS, TURNED HIS PEN TODAY AGAINST PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU DESCRIBING LATTER'S PROPOSAL AS EITHER "A PROPAGANDA DEVICE" OR A "LAST MINUTE IMPROVISATION AIMED AT PROFITING FROM ANGRY SITUATION CREATED BY ACT 101."

3. COMMENT: AS RYAN POINTED OUT, IT WOULD BE NAIVE TO THINK THAT TRUDEAU DID NOT REALIZE HIS PROPOSAL WAS FOREDOOMED BEFORE SENDING IT. PRESUMABLY IT WAS INTENDED DEMONSTRATE QUEBECOIS UNREASONABLENESS IN REJECTING SUCH A "GENEROUS OFFER." ONE POSSIBLE EXPLANATION FOR MAKING PROPOSAL COULD BE WISH TO RELIEVE INTENSE PRESSURE P.M. HAS BEEN UNDER TO REACT TO QUEBEC'S BILL 101. WHATEVER HIS REASONS, IT IS HARD TO IDENTIFY AUDIENCE TRUDEAU WAS INTENDING TO IMPRESS. PROPOSAL'S REJECTION AS SERIOUS PROPOSITION BY QUEBEC WAS CLEARLY FOREDOOMED. OTHER PROVINCES, ALL OF WHOM JEALOUSLY GUARD THEIR CONSTITUTIONAL PREROGATIVE, MIGHT ALSO BE EXPECTED VIEW WITH RESERVATIONS A PROPOSAL WHICH COULD BE INTERPRETED AS FEDERAL ENCROACHMENT. THUS, RYAN'S CONCLUSION THAT IT WAS NOT INTENDED AS SERIOUS PROPOSAL DOES SEEM ACCURATE. AS SHOT IN POLITICAL BATTLE AGAINST SEPARATISM PROPOSAL'S AUDIENCE ALSO HARD TO IDENTIFY. OPPONENTS OF BILL 101 IN QUEBEC MUST BE RULED OUT AS THEY ARE UNLIKELY FAVOR INCLUSION OF OBJECTION-ABLE PROVISIONS OF LAW 101 IN CONSTITUTION. ANGLOPHONES IN MANY CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 QUEBEC 00340 130224Z

PARTS OF CANADA MIGHT ALSO BE EXPECTED OBJECT TO WHAT THEY COULD CONSIDER AS SPECIAL STATUS BEING GIVEN QUEBEC. AS BIRON POINTED OUT, FRANCOPHONES IN QUEBEC--EVEN THOSE WHO OPPOSE SEPARATISM--DO NOT WISH DILUTE PROVINCIAL JURISDICTION IN FIELD SUCH AS EDUCATION. WHATEVER MOTIVATED TRUDEAU, IT IS PERFECTLY CLEAR THAT LEVESQUE COULD NOT HAVE REACTED OTHER THAN IN THE WAY HE DID. MOREOVER, HE IS LIKELY TO BE SUPPORTED BY MOST QUEBECOIS EVEN MANY OF THOSE MOST OPPOSED TO SEPARATISM. MCNAMARA

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Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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TAGS: PINT, CA, (LEVESQUE, RENE)
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